SIR WILLIAM ALAN FAIRLIE-CUNINGHAME


Sydney University Book of Remembrance.
All of this 1910 team served, with the exception of Schonberg, who went into the Ministry and Twigg who is likely (?) during 1915, to have lost a hand in a farming accident. Kendall, an Anzac, died from illness contracted there. Blackett, K.I.A. Pozieres, Belgium.

School records spell William’s surname, with one “n.” But, as seen with the signature below, it was “nn” This, initially presented a difficulty in finding digitized records.

The Records and Honour Roll have William and his brother Hussey, listed with their hyphenated family name, under “C,” not “F.”

Following, from ASC School History. Notable old boys:
SIR WILLIAM ALAN FAIRLIE-CUNINGHAME (Bart.),
M.C., B.E. (Britten and Stiles periods)

Born at Mansfield, Victoria, on 31 January 1893, son of Sir W. E. Fairlie-Cuninghame, baronet, of Marengo, New South Wales. After leaving All Saints' College in 1911, he went to the University of Sydney, where he gained his engineering degree in 1915. He served in the Great War as a lieutenant with the 1st Field Company Engineers and the 5th Pioneer Battalion A.I.F., and was wounded at Bellicourt on 29 September 1918; he was awarded the Military Cross.

On his return to Australia he engaged in fruit farming in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, and in 1935 came to Sydney, where he took up school-teaching. He joined the C.S.I.R. in 1943 as a research officer at the National Standards Laboratories, a position which he still holds.

In 1939, on the death of his brother (also an Old Boy), he became the fifteenth Baronet of Robertland, a Scottish title created in 1630.

We have to chronicle the following university examination successes. W. A. Fairlie Cunninghame passed the Senior in December with Algebra, A; Mechanics, A; Geometry, B; French, B; Trigonometry, B. He also secured the Medal in Mechanics, bringing special honor to his school.

Having failed to secure his Engineering Matriculation in English Literature, it was necessary for him to sit again in this one subject in March. He passed with flying colours, and is now, from all accounts, enjoying to the full the varied existence of an undergraduate.

We congratulate him on his past successes; especially on winning the medal in Mechanics. May it not be the last honour he brings upon his old school. We wish him every success.
Description of W. A. Frambie

Age 22 years 2 months
Height 6 feet 11 3/4 inches
Weight 164 lbs
Chest Measurement 31 3/4 inches
Complexion Fair
Eyes Good Grey
Hair Brown
Religious Denomination Col. E
Dear Mr. Stiles,

In the last "Bathurstian" I noticed some letters from O.B.'s, and thought my poor efforts in a literary direction might be of some interest. I think this is my first communiqué, so will start from the beginning.

I reached the Peninsula in October, 1915, and had a quiet time till the evacuation, when we all went to Lemnos for three
weeks before returning to Egypt. On my way back I was unfortunate enough to become ill, and slowed my military ardour in a hospital for a month. On being discharged I rejoined my company at Tel-el-Kebir. We then moved camp to Serapeum on the Canal, where we assisted in constructing defences against “Johnny” Turk. From Serapeum I was sent back to Tel-el-Kebir to join the 13th Field Coy. in the new 4th Division. That was in March, 1916. At the end of the month the Coy. marched down to Serapeum again. After having been there a few days, I was informed that I had been given a commission in the 5th Pioneer Batt., which I immediately joined. They were stationed at Ferry Post, also on the Canal, near Ismailia.

We put in several months training, and at last bid goodbye to the desert on the 22nd of June. I can tell you it was a great relief to see the last of it. The only time I want to see it again is on the homeward trip.

The trip to France was fairly uneventful. We saw a good deal of land not seen on the ordinary trip, and put into a small port in Sardinia for a few hours. The trip through France was fine. It took nearly three days, during which time we lived in the one train. The scenery in the Rhone valley was absolutely magnificent. I never want to see anything finer.

After the trip we billeted in a small village, and resumed our training and completed our equipment with such things as steel and gas helmets, etc. Then we moved on to business.

Being what we are, we are lucky enough to live in billets about three miles behind the firing line, so have a decent place to live in, ——, in which we fare far better than the infantry. The march to and from work is rather tedious, but does not outweigh the advantages of living well back.

Until quite lately the Company I belong to have been draining the whole sector, and have dug and cleaned out over 1000 yds. of drains, besides numerous “odd jobs.” The country is as flat as a pancake, and there is water anywhere at a depth of 6 feet, hence there are no trenches to speak of, but everything is built up above ground.

On the whole, things have been very quiet, with the exception of a small raid south of Fromelles in July. I quote the papers, but if it was a small raid, I have no hankerings after a large one. Beyond that raid we have seen nothing but a few shells. Just as we had completed the drainage, which is far from interesting, and had commenced some interesting
work constructing trenches, I had the misfortune to develop tonsilitis, and was packed off to hospital once more, where I am now. I am in a large coastal town, which I may not name, and am hoping for a trip to "Blighty." One never knows, I may be sent over, but I fear the authorities are hard-hearted. So much for myself.

I have not run into as many O.B.'s as I would have liked, but have heard of a good many. I met Noel Fitzhardinge in Cairo last January, and heard from him of several O.B.'s, including Ben Barton, Claude Glasson, and Raymond Gilmour—all in the 7th L.II. Jack Mitchell supports a star, and is with the 4th Brigade H.Q. A. D. Barton is attached to the 1st A. Casualty Clearing Station, which I passed through this time; also Dr. Brooke Moore, who informed me that "Chap" Sutor had been wounded. There is an Edgeley in the same Battalion as I, but I have forgotten his initials. He went through the Engineering School at the 'Varsity, and supports two stars. I also met Eric Ward in Cairo. He was a Sergeant, and was recovering from a bad knee. I have met others, but cannot remember them now. Out of the list I have mentioned, I am afraid you will not know any, but I know the O.B.'s Union likes information, so there it is, such as it is.

I was very pleased to get the "Bathurstian," and to note its prosperous tone; but I suppose the war has hit the school to some extent. I hope that extent has not been large, and that it will continue to prosper.

With kindest regards to yourself and Mrs. Stiles, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

W. A. F. CUNINGHAME.

Note his wry reference above, to the Battle of Fromelles, 20/7/16. There were 5533 Australian casualties.

Dossiers have also been prepared for those mentioned in the above text. It was noted that he used a couple of nicknames and a future researcher should be not thrown off with say, "Noel" actually having first name "Frederick."

Below, are copies of rather indistinct records of service. To assist readers seeking details. Some of the
following originals are repeated in their different forms. It appears that William “reported for duty” at Anzac 25th October.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/4/16</td>
<td>Taken on Strength of Pioneer Bn.</td>
<td>ALEXANDRIA</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Embarked to join B.E.F.</td>
<td>LARSVILLE</td>
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<td>16.9.16</td>
<td>Lymphadenitis</td>
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<td>16.9.16</td>
<td>O.R.H.</td>
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<td>16.9.16</td>
<td>Lymphadenitis, Adm. Transferred to O.R.H.</td>
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<td>16.9.16</td>
<td>To be Lined</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td>23.9.16</td>
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<td>1.10.16</td>
<td>Admitted Lymphadenitis</td>
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<td>4.10.16</td>
<td>Lymphadenitis, To England Embarked</td>
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<td>20.10.16</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>From whom received</td>
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<td>23-9-16</td>
<td>Admitted to service</td>
<td>Wardour 1s</td>
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<td>31-10-16</td>
<td>Discharged</td>
<td>Helwyn</td>
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<td>31-10-16</td>
<td>Proceeded to join Bn, 14 Yorks</td>
<td>England</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-11-16</td>
<td>Joined Dept in England</td>
<td>Pte. Yorks</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-11-16</td>
<td>M.O to Unit in A.S</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-11-16</td>
<td>Rejoined Unit</td>
<td>In the Field</td>
<td>10-11-16</td>
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<tr>
<td>19-5-17</td>
<td>Proceeded on leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>19-5-17</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-6-17</td>
<td>Rejoined Unit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21.10.16. To report No.1 Command Depot, Fit. C. H.
17.9.16. Suce to hospital. In the field.

Transf. from 5th Dr. Kings. 26.9.16.

10.11.16. Rejoined unit from hospital, 5th Dr. Kings. In the Field.
8.11.16. Reported for duty. 4th posted 5th. P.O. from 1st Bn.
29.8.17. Seconded for duty with A.D.M.S. 1st Bn.

Attended & qualified 1st Class (Distinguished) with a fair working Knowledge of service in all the A.E. Rifle courses held at the School of Musketry Tidworth from 27 Sep. to 27 Oct. 1917. (R.O. P. 2446. R.A.F. 34th order on UK 77/17)
8.11.17. On command at Bombing Sch. Lyddhurst. From Pioneer Trg. 1st Bn. Sutton Vallery. (L.R. 10424)

Qualified as an instructor at the 5th C.S. of Instruction at 14-2-17. The Southern Command Bombing School, Lyddhurst. 8-11-17.
(R.O. P. 2446. L.R. 10257.)

25.6.16. Disembarked at Marseilles.
4.10.16. A.D.M. C.S. from England to C.S. 18.9.16.
Group portrait of members of the 5th Pioneer Battalion inscribed
‘From the Officers of a “Famous Australian Battalion”, France July
18th 1917.

29-3-18. Returned to England.
27-7-19. Embarked from Australia.
18-7-19. Returned to Australia on the "Wyreema".
Dear Sir,

I have much pleasure in forwarding hereunder copy of extract from the Second Supplement, No. 31583 to the London Gazette, dated 4th October, 1919, relating to the conspicuous services rendered by yourself whilst serving with the Australian Imperial Force.

x x x x

AWARDED THE MILITARY CROSS
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With reference to the award conferred as announced in the London Gazette, dated 8th March, 1919, the following is the statement of service for which the decoration was conferred:

Lieutenant WILLIAM ALAN FAIRLIE-CUNNINGHAM, M.C.

Near Bellicourt, on 29th September, 1918, though wounded the previous evening, he led his platoon with great gallantry during the operations, despite thick fog and heavy enemy barrage of high explosive and gas shells. He assisted in the mopping-up of Bellicourt, and by skilful handling of his platoon saved many casualties. His bearing, cheerfulness and example were most valuable assistance in the successful completion of urgent work.

x x x x x

The above has been promulgated in Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, No. 10 dated 29th January, 1920.

45 Wyvern Avenue
Chatswood 2067.
Dear Sir,

This is my application for the Anzac Medallion, and my particulars are as follows.

Unit: Ist Field Co. Engineers (7th Reinforcements).

Service No. 1307 (Memory unreliable as to last two figures. Was originally part of 6th Reinforcement in which I had the No. 12??)

Name in full, William Alan Fairlie Cuminghame.

As I am still active I would also like to have the lapel badge.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

[Later history. Transferred Feb 1916 to 13th Field Co. and in May 1916 to 5th Pioneer Bn with rank of 2nd Lieutenant in which I served until the Armistice.]

At this late stage we record our congratulations to W. F. Cuminghame, who was married at St. Mark's, Darling Point on 2nd July, 1929. W.F.'s wife was Miss Irene Terry, daughter of the late Mr. H. Margrove Terry of Griffith, and Mrs. Terry, of Edgecliffe.

A BARONET KILLED.

In Motor Accident at Manilla.
Sir Hussey Fairlie-Cuninghame, fourteenth baronet of Robertsland, Ayrshire, who for 8 years has been a farmer in the Manilla district, was crushed to death when a tractor he was working overturned on the bank of a gully, on his property at Keepit. When found, a few minutes after the accident, he was still alive, but he died shortly afterwards.

The Riverina Grazier (Hay) 10/2/1939

Sir Hussey Burge Fairlie-Cuninghame late, Bt., who succeeds his father, Sir William Fairlie-Cuninghame, Bt., who died at his Rose Bay home, aged 73, last I week; is a Grazier of Ti-Tree Creek, Kyambaj NSW and held a commission during the war with the 11th Battery A.F.A.; He is the 14th baronet. The title - dates from 1630.

Richmond River Herald 14/5/29 P.2

Lieut. H. B. Cunninghame, whose soldier brother returned recently, was met by his father. Sir William Fairlie Cunninghame, of Marengo.

SMH2/7/19 P.14

The death occurred on Sunday at his home in Rawson road, Rose Bay, of Sir William Edward Fairlie-Cuninghame, at the age of 73 years. He was the eldest son of the late Sir Hastings Cunninghame, of Melbourne. Deceased was well known through out the Young district, having been in possession of Windemere Station, Marengo, for many years.

Grenfell Record 9/5/29 P.2

Baronet- Grazier Crushed To Death

Manilla , Wednesday.- Sir Hussey Burgh Fairlie-Cuninghame, the 14th baronet of Robertland, Ayrshire, who for eight years had been a farmer in the Manilla district, was crushed to death yesterday when the tractor he was working overturned,' on the bank of a gully on his property at Keepit.

When found a few minutes after the accident, he was still alive, but died shortly afterwards.

Sir William Alan Fairlie-Cuninghame, who has succeeded to the title, is in charge of the preparatory section of St. John's Psychology School, Vaucluse. He proposes to continue his work.

The new Lady Fairlie-Cuninghame was formerly Irene Alice Terry. Heir to the baronetcy is their son, Henry, aged eight.

Barrier Miner 8/2/1939 P.2

Sir W.A. Fairlie-Cuninghame attended Old Boys’ Dinner, Sydney 1/4/64.

Bathurstian 1964 P.44
There is one other story that Sir Allen used to tell. He had a piece of gold from his mother’s choker necklace with him during the war. One day he lost it in the mud of a trench in France. The next day he made a thorough search through the mud and miraculously found it. Ultimately, that small piece of gold was made into his future wife’s wedding ring, which fortunately we still have.
THE TECHNICAL INFANTRY.

Written for the 1917 Christmas card of the 5th Pioneer Bn.

When the first of the rocketting flares burst free
And the lights grow dim in the sky,
If you watch the tracks to the line you'll see
The Pioneers wandering by.

With their rifles slung and their bayonets bare
And maybe a shovel or two,
In the saps or the line, you'll find them there,
Just pushing the old job through.

Or on the top on a wiring stunt,
Or digging a sap like hell,
Or laying a corduroy track to the front,
To the sound of the whining shell.

We have paid our toll to the gods of chance,
And the toll has never been light,
For there's hardly a road to the line in France,
But is marked with our milestones white.

So I give you a toast on this Christmas Day;
Drink long - drink deep - drink free
To the silent workers who pave the way,
To the Technical Infantry.

F.H. Stevens,
December 1917

Copy of a letter extract in Mother's scrapbook.
(The writer and recipient are unknown to me, W.A.F.C.)

You will probably know by now that Bill Cuninghame got his M.C. for the Bellicourt stunt. I believe I told you in an earlier letter that he was in for one and everyone is delighted now that it has come through. I do not tell you because you know him and his people but because it is due to him that this should be known. I understand from our O.C. that on the day of the stunt when things had subsided somewhat practically the whole of Cuninghame's platoon paraded to ask if something might not be done about a decoration for him. I do not think anybody could hope for a higher tribute than that. He is in Paris on leave so he is not here for me to confess what I have written, and just as well for I fancy he would kill me if he knew.

6-12-18.
From Janet Fairlie- Cunninghame 2015

Ten Fierce Australians In Oxford Street

A correspondent has supplied a complete version of the verses referred to by Dr. C. E. W. Bean in his article in Thursday’s “Herald” on the development of the Australian character.

“Credit is due,” writes this correspondent, J.W.H.P., King’s Crogs, “not to John Galsworthy but to Herbert Palmer who later included them in his book, ‘The Bushranger.’ They were republished in 1940 in an anthology, ‘Word From Home.’”

They run:

As I was walking down Oxford Street
Ten fierce soldiers I chanced to meet:

They wore big slouch hats with khaki sashes,
And talked like the angry guns, in flashes.
And my friend said to me, “They come from Australia;
Villainous fellows for War’s regalia;
John Briton keeps a tobacconist’s shed.
And twice they have held a gun at his head.”

Well, I would have given all I had
To have gone with the lot of them, good or bad.
To have heard the wickedest say, “Old fellow!”
And staunch his wounds where the black guns below,
I would think it a merry thing to die
With such stalwart comrades standing by.

One of them had round eyes like coals—
True parson’s quarry when he hunts souls.
The bravestest made my heart sing:
The devil in hell would have shunned his leer.
And the tallest and thinnest bore visible traces
Of his banished granddaddy’s vanished grace.

But all the lot of that swaggering ten
Were terrible, fine, strong soldier men.
And I fairly sobbed at the four grave-crosses.
As my triumphing soul sang England’s praise.
O! all the Germans is Berlin town
Couldn’t put those ten Australians down.

William Alan Fairlie. Cunninghame
A Private on Gallipoli.
1st Lieutenant in the 5th Pioneer Battalion in France.
"D" Company, 5th Pioneer Bn. Beaumetz, France, 1918, while awaiting the signing of the armistice. William centre, wearing cap

From Janet Fairlie-Cunninghame 2015.
Less than three months to go, to survive the war!
They wanted a crowd who could work all night,
and carry a camel’s load,
And find their way to the same old line, with never
a trace of a road,
To do the wiring, and dig the saps, and toil where
the big shells fall,
And lay the railways, and make the roads, or fight
if they got the call.

So they culled from Australia a thousand men,
and later a thousand more;
Men from the cities, and men from the Bush,
they rallied from shore to shore;
And some of them guided an office pen, and some
of them wielded shears;
But they issued the lot with a soldier’s kit, and
they christened them Pioneers.

We don’t loom large in the paper yap, but talk to
the men who know,
From the front line back to the heavy guns, they
see when we come and go;
They meet us crowded in half-dug saps, to let the
infantry by,
They pass us nightly on duckboard tracks, and
they know where our dead mates lie.

We’ve had good times, but they’re mostly rough,
but it’s all a part of the game,
And no matter which way the cards are dealt, the
Pioneers stay the same;
And this Christmas greeting they send along, to
show they remember you—
Here’s hoping that long ere the year runs out
we’ll have shovelled the last sap through.

—F.H. S.

(F.H. Stevens)
BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

The Queen and I wish you God-speed, and a safe return to your homes and dear ones.

A grateful Mother Country is proud of your splendid services characterized by unsurpassed devotion and courage.

[Signature]

George R.I.
During the First World War he served as a Private on Gallipoli and as a 1st Lieutenant in the 5th Pioneer Battalion in France. There he was awarded the Military Cross in recognition of his gallantry and devotion to duty in the field on Sept. 29th, 1918 while serving on the Hindenberg Line.

A friend on Dec. 6th, 1918 wrote this to Alan's mother:

"You will probably know by now that Bill Cunningham got his M.C. for the Bellicourt stunt. I believe I told you in an earlier letter that he was in for one and everyone is delighted now that it has come through. I do not tell you because you know him and his people but because it is due to him that this should be known. I understand from our O.C. that on the day of the stunt when things had subsided somewhat practically the whole of Cunningham's platoon paraded to ask if something might not be done about a decoration for him. I do not think anybody could hope for a higher tribute than that. He is in Paris on leave so he is not here for me to confess that I have written, and just as well, for I fancy he would kill me if he knew."

The sentiments expressed in this letter show Alan's two outstanding characteristics: Courage and humility.

Alan was a shy, retiring man who never sought honours. He exemplified the family motto 'Fortitudine'. His courage stood him in good stead throughout his life, not only during the war.
heart he had to give up the farm and move to Sydney. This was a complete change of occupation and way of life.

It was somewhat with reluctance that he accepted the hereditary title of 15th Baronet of Robertland on the untimely death of his elder brother Halsey in 1939. The Baronetcy was created in 1630 by James I and is one of the oldest of such titles. It was always with a sense of great pride and affection for his family that he carried this honour.

Another more recent example of the courageous way he handled life's circumstances was his move to Howll Village in 1973 where he virtually knew no one. In a very short time he had made friends and was well liked by all who were privileged to know him.

There was nothing more that Alan liked than to be useful to others, and while this was possible he maintained a zest for life. But more latterly his physical condition severely restricted his capacity to work and be useful, and at this point he felt there was no purpose in living longer. He must be thankful that the end was peaceful and not unduly drawn out.

To his son and grandchildren he set a fine example and will be sadly missed.

1893-1981
Bomb-Throwing Instructor’s Certificate.

Southern Command - Bombing School.

Capt. W.A.F. Cunningham

of the 5th Lincs. R.A. is qualified as an

Instructor in Bomb-Throwing

(Station) Lunda  Copy  [Signature] W.J. S. Sutcliffe, Major Commandant

(Date) 8th November 1917.